

NEW HARMONY AND

ITS CONTRIBU-

TIONS

by

Wiley Reeves Boucher

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Outline

I. Introduction

- A. Location of New Harmony
- B. Industrial Conditions in Europe
 - 1. Robert Owen and his rise in industry
 - 2. The New Lanark mills and schools
- C. Owen's accomplishments in New Lanark

II. New Harmony and the Rappist

- A. Rise of the Rappist in Germany
- B. The Rappist in Pennsylvania
- C. The Rappist in New Harmony
 - 1. Their physical surroundings and plant
 - 2. Their industries
 - 3. Their success
- D. Disposition of the New Harmony properties

III. The New Harmony of Robert Owen

- A. The physical plant
- B. Owen's purpose and plan
- C. Owen arrival in United States
 - 1. An address of note in the capital
 - 2. Invitation to settlers to come to New Harmony
- D. The arrival of the settlers
- E. Management and the industries
 - 1. Formation of the society
 - 2. The industries carried on
 - 3. The governing of the body
- F. New Settlements formed
 - 1. Macluria
 - 2. Fieba Pevell

IV. The School in New Harmony

- A. Maclure as superintendent
- B. Pestalozzian methods and teachers
- C. The children and the subject matter taught
- D. Books and equipment
- E. A summary of the causes of the failure of the project of Owen
- F. Owen's final attempt to make a communistic settlement in America, his trip to Mexico

V. Conclusions

- A. The Owen children became citizens in United States
- B. Introduction of new and better methods in teaching
- C. The subject of science stressed

NEW HARMONY AND ITS CONTRIBUTIONS

Introduction

In a study of the history of the communistic settlements and of a history of vocational education in the United States, one very early in the study finds the name ' New Harmony' mentioned. Where is New Harmony, what did it contribute to our development, and why does it have a place in history? These are some of the questions this paper will attempt to answer.

The town of New Harmony is situated on the Wabash river, on the Indiana side, about thirty miles north of its junction with the Ohio river. From description of the place, the soil, the timber, rainfall and climate, it was quite an ideal place for a communistic project. It was here that two great projects were attempted under circumstances almost directly opposite. Both were successful in some things.

When industry began to grow in Europe as a result of the Industrial Revolution, new problems came to light. In England the factories began to fight for their existence so they thought. Among the industries of the time, the cotton mills occupied a very prominent place. One name soon appears in the study of cotton spinning and weaving in England. That name is Robert Owen. What did Owen have to do with New Harmony, Indiana? Did he attempt any

other projects in America?

To answer these questions, one must take a rather long run before jumping. The life of Owen is full of many and varied activities. He was born in Newtown, Scotland, May 14, 1771. His parents were poor but highly respected people. He received a rather limited education in the public school of his day. By the age of eleven, he was apprenticed to a London merchant. The young man soon proved to have extraordinary ability in organizing business and industry. He had a good analytical mind, broad sympathies, excellent judgments, courage, and an unlimited store of energy.

His business career was a phenomenal success. It reads almost like a fairy story. The age of nineteen found him the superintendent of a spinning mill employing five hundred men at Manchester. At the age of twenty-nine, he was in was in New Lanark Scotland, a town of 2500 cotton mill hands and families. He was superintendent of the Cotton mill. It was here in New Lanark where Owen made a business success and developed his philosophy which embodied his communistic ideas.¹

of New Lanark as it was when Owen went there and his accomplishments will be necessary that we may understand his interest and activities in America.

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Morris Hillquit, History of Socialism in the United States
p.53

The village of New Lanark in 1799, when Owen went there, consisted of 2500 mill hands and their families. A Mr. Dale was its sole proprietor. The village represented the typical aspect of a manufacturing settlement of that time. About 500 of the mill workers were children taken from charitable institutions and almshouses of the great cities. Their value to the company was their work. The children were housed and fed in barracks erected for the purpose. It is safe to say, both food and shelter were quite poor. They worked from six in the morning until seven at night. These children were as young as six years. Those of them who survived naturally grew up to be dwarfed and deformed, physically, morally and mentally. The work was so strenuous that none but the lowest stratum of society of adult working men would take employment in the mills. The village was dirty. The population was given to much drunkenness, brutality, thievery and sexual excess. The village money lenders had them hopelessly in debt to them. The tavern keeper and the storekeeper almost owned them. This miserable condition of things faced Owen when he took charge² of the mills. What change in conditions did he bring about?

He struck immediately at the roots of the trouble. Of course, he met much opposition. Within a short time he was able to accomplish the following reform:

1. Banish storekeepers who sold inferior goods at excessive prices.

2. Establish stores where quality goods could be purchased at cost.
3. The ginmills and taverns were driven from the city.
4. The streets were cleaned.
5. More comfortable dwellings were constructed as rapidly as possible.
6. No more pauper children were received.
7. Abolishment of all systems of punishments for delinquent workmen.
8. Reduced hours of labor and raised wages.
9. He established a model infant school and facilities for educating the children of his employees and families of the town.³

The changes were not without protest. The partners and stockholders feared the dividends would diminish. They said they were in business, not philanthropy. After changing partners several times, Owen finally had a group of people who were willing to work with him. He felt free to carry out his original plans.

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Ibid., p. 54

Owen met all kinds of opposition to his reforms by the superintendents and even the workingmen themselves. An embargo placed on cotton by the United States in 1806. Thousands of English spinners were thrown out of work because of this embargo. Owen insisted on paying the employees during this period whether they worked or not. This won the confidence of the workmen and aided him greatly in his reforms.

The original stockholders and partners objected most of all to Owen infant schools. Now he could develop the type of school he desired. Owen was a reader of Rousseau, as were most philosophers. He liked Rousseau's ideas about educating the children. Of course he had heard of Pestalozzi and his school at Yverdon. Owen sent two of his sons to Fellenberg's school. He was not favorably impressed with Pestalozzi's school when he actually visited it. His visit was at a time when old Pestalozzi was in greatest despair. But he got some ideas from his travels on the continent of the type of school he desired to establish for the children of the workmen.

The first need to establish his school was a building. The year 1815 was spent in completing a suitable structure. The second story of the building was devoted to the school. This space was divided into two rooms. One part was about 90 feet by 45 feet and the other was about 50 feet by 45 feet. The ceiling was 20 feet high. These two rooms were ample size it seems judged by our present day rooms. The lower story was used largely as a community building.

The infant school was opened in January 1816. All children above one year of age were allowed to attend if their parents were willing. The children were in charge of two teachers. Owen took a very active part in conducting the school and working with the two teachers. The purpose of the school was largely to place the children in good

surroundings as early as possible. His rules to be followed may be summed up as follows:

1. Never on any provocation use harsh words or actions on the children.
2. Inculcate the spirit of loving kindness in the children by example.
3. The children were not to be annoyed with books.
4. They were to be taught common things and their uses by answering their questions.

The school room was ideally furnished for children with pictures of animals, maps, objects from the garden, field and woods. The progress made by the children surpassed all expectancy. They soon proved the worth of such training. The education in New Lanark was not confined to the kindergarten and primary ages. The system provided for the children up to the age of twelve. There were evening classes also for older children. Owen took great care in preparing the curriculum offered. He was very fond of natural science and geography, so we find stress placed on the two subjects. Music and dancing were taught. Play formed an important part.⁵

Of course it is not practical to try to mention all accomplishments of Owen here. The school is significant because it was the embodiment of ideas on education and also a phase of his philosophy. New Lanark within a generation

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Frank Podmore, Robert Owen, pp. 126-159

was an altogether different town. The once miserable village became a city of happiness, health, joy and pleasure. It was the admiration of thousands who visited it yearly.

The achievements of Owen spread over the entire civilized world. He was probably the most popular man in all Europe.

But Owen was not satisfied with his work at New Lanark. He desired to enlarge his sphere of activity. During his activities he somehow developed a great number of ideas about communities. He believed that communities of 500 to 1500 persons could produce the necessities of life easily. They would live in large houses surrounded by gardens. The men were to do the work on large production basis while the women did the domestic duties and taught the children. The idea was too wild and too radical for the company to endorse, so Owen undertook the project at his own expense.⁶

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Hillquit, History of Socialism in the United States p. 57

New Harmony and the Rappist

Robert Owen, to carry out his ideas regarding a community turned to America as a place for the experiment. In order to understand the situation thoroughly, it will be necessary to bring the history of New Harmony up to the date of the Owen venture. This history is also interesting for the purpose of contrast.

During the last part of the eighteenth century, a group of people in southern Germany became dissatisfied with the extreme formality which was followed by the Lutheran Church. They lived in and around Wurtemberg. This portion of Germany always seemed a rather favorable place for dissension. The activities with which we are concerned are grouped around one man, George Rapp by name.

Rapp was born in 1757 at Sptingen in Wurtemberg. His parents were respectable poor people. His father was a farmer and vine-dresser. His education was fair for the time. This man was a great reader from early youth and was given to much reflection. The Bible was the one book of his meditation. He became dissatisfied with the social condition of the people among whom he lived. Their condition was continually being compared by him to the social orders of the New Testament.

When about 30 years of age, Rapp began preaching his ideas to a few of his followers, using his own house as a meeting place. The clergy resented this. They began

persecution of the group; some were imprisoned. As usual, such a procedure served only to increase the number of followers and to make them more determined. The group was denounced as "separatist", and had the courage to accept the name. But Rapp taught his followers to obey the laws of the land and to pay all taxes, both state and church. He in turn insisted on the right to believe what they pleased. The proposition was fairly impregnable, especially since they were good law-abiding citizens.

During the course of six years time, Rapp had gathered about him over 300 families, all ardent hearers and firm believers. By 1803, these adherents proposed to emigrate in a body to America, where like the Puritans of old, they could worship God after their own conscience. Rapp and a few leaders came first to pick a location for the settlement. After some searching and looking around, they selected a site in the Connoquenessing valley in Pennsylvania, about 25 miles north of Pittsburgh. By the autumn of 1804, two ship loads, over six hundred of Rapps followers, landed in Baltimore and Philadelphia and proceeded to the place selected for them.

This group of six hundred was of the peasant and merchant class. They had practically no wealth but were thrifty and industrious. By February 1805 they were settled in their new home. On the fifteenth of the month they formally organized themselves into an organization

known as "Harmony Society". They agreed to;

1. Contribute all their possessions to, a common fund
2. Adopt a uniform simple dress and style of house
3. Keep henceforth all things in common
4. Labor for the common good of the whole group

A few more families joined them. By the summer, there were 750 individuals in the settlement.

Rapp was their leader. He is described as a man possessing a robust frame, sound health, great energy, perseverance, enterprise and executive ability. All these traits were seasoned with a liberal measure of common sense.

The leader was fortunate in having a community of people willing to work. During the first year, they erected 50 log houses, a church, a school house, grist-mill, barn and workshop. They cleared 150 acres of land. The second year saw 400 acres more land cleared, a saw-mill built, a tannery, a large storehouse, a distillery and a large vineyard planted. (They soon had a far reaching reputation for their excellent whisky produced, but they used very little themselves.) They produced corn, wheat, rye, flax and wool. Rapp believed in producing what they needed.

The group prospered economically much greater than any one expected. John Melish visited them in Pennsyl-

vania, when he was traveling in America, sometime shortly before 1814.⁸ At that time they had built and operated;

50 log cabins	1 oil mill
2 large barns	1 dyers shop
1 gristmill	1 tannery
1 inn	1 saw-mill
1 brewery	1 church
1 hempmill	1 wool carding machine
2 spinning jennies	1 soap and candle factory

The 800 people engaged in work of all kinds, among them were:

100 farmers	1 soap maker
3 shepherds	4 distillers
10 masons	2 millers
3 stone cutters	1 butcher
3 brick makers	6 dyers
7 coopers	2 potters
10 shoemakers	1 fuller
3 tanners	1 schoolmaster
1 storekeeper	17 weavers
3 turners	10 carpenters
2 nailors	10 smiths
3 rope makers	2 wagon makers
7 tailors	2 saddlers

1 gardner	1 brewer
6 joiners	2 oil makers
2 warpers	2 hatters
1 minister	8 spinners
1 tavern-keeper	1 doctor

The youth of the society were kept in school until 14 years of age. The school hours were devoted to such labor as the pupils could perform. The society believed the youth should be taught to labor as well as to read and write. They taught German and English, writing and arithmetic. The youth chose their trade. Those destined for medicine were given a college education.⁹

The ~~situation~~ ~~Pennsylvania~~ lacked two things necessary almost to the organization, a water way in and out and soil better adapted to growing vines. In 1814, after much thought and discussion, the society decided to find a more desirable place. They sold their holding, 6000 acres with all improvements for \$100,000. With this money they bought 30,000 on the Wabash river in Posey County, Indiana. This tract of land was to be the New Harmony community so frequently mentioned since.

As before in ~~the~~ ~~Pennsylvania~~ settlement, a few workmen proceeded the main group of people to prepare for their coming. By the summer of 1815, the whole colony

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Charles Nordhoff, The Communistic Societies of the United States. pp. 66-80

was in its new home which they called "Harmony". Here the Pennsylvania experiment was repeated in building and equipment. Of course, this time they built far bigger and better. The town became the important business center for a radius of a great distance. The group sold their surplus products. A new group of friends and relatives joined them, coming from Germany. Their population increased 800 or 800 while in Indiana.¹⁰

John Dillon,¹¹ says they were typical German people, possessing the traits of frugality and industry. They were professedly Lutherans. Here at Harmony they erected a church, a public school house, opened up farms, planted orchards and vineyards, built a flour mill, a house for entertainment, and a store. These people engaged in agriculture and mechanical skills of the time with great success.

These people owned all property in common. The authority to govern, both temporal and spiritual was vested in one individual, George Rapp. The society grew in numbers for the year 1814 until it included over 900 in 1821. Each member of the group worked and contributed his share of work to the organization. They lived very peacefully. There were no spendthrifts, idlers or drunkards. There is no record of a lawsuit among them.¹¹

^{10.}

Ibid., pp. 66-80

¹¹

John Dillon, History of Indiana pp. 548-549

Another account of the same group of people says they held 30,000 acres in common. Their houses were built alike, the same size and design. The people believed in absolute equality. There were neither stones nor mounds in the grave yard. All were buried alike. They were equal even in the cemetery.

During their residence in Pennsylvania there was a great revival of religion among them. This was in 1807. During this revival, the men and women took a vow to celibacy. They dissolved their marriage ties and from that time on, there were no more marriage ceremonies in Harmony and no more children born. Outside this they were not peculiar. They enjoyed a good meal, glass of beer, and led a gay and merry life.¹² (One account said only 75 children were born to the Rappist during their residence, and those were born in Pennsylvania before 1807.)

The Rappist, as we may now call them, succeeded in a great way in Indiana. The soil was the best and they worked it hard and well. They had built comfortable homes. But Father Rapp, as he was then called, decided to sell out and leave. This was in 1824. He gave as his excuse, the land was full of malaria and they were too far from the business center of the United States. Other reasons were advanced for his leaving. Some say he was

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¹³ Indiana, Magazine of History, Vol. 19 p. 65-66

¹³ Hillquit, History of Socialism in United States, pp. 32-34
Hillquit, Morris

losing his hold on his people now that they had become rich and there was no need to work as they did in pioneer days. They had too much time to think. They needed the pioneer hardships to keep them united. (It was hinted in the Indiana History Magazine, that the neighboring settlements began to question their celibacy, thereby making the situation disagreeable, that caused the Rappist to move.)¹⁴ The experiment had been a marvelous success from a pecuniary standpoint. The German emigrants brought to this country a total of \$25,000 in wealth. They were now estimated to be worth \$2,000,000, quite an increase for a period of twenty years.

An English agriculturist by the name of Richard Flower had settled in Illinois, about 25 miles from Harmony. Father Rapp learned of a contemplated visit of Flower to England and commissioned him to sell the Harmony community. This man came in contact with Robert Owen, whom he had learned desired to start a communistic settlement. The offer was tempting indeed. Here was a village already built, capable of supporting 10,000 people. The purchase was consummated in April 1825, Owen buying the property for \$150,000.

The significances of the Rappist communistic experiment up to this time are few but important. Their

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Indiana, Magazine of History, Vol. 12, Editorial

chief value is in contrast with the Owen project. The Rappist so far proved several things:

1. That a group of people, living on rich soil, working hard and long every day, can supply physical needs for the adults so engaged in great abundance.
2. That a leader with absolute power, a man of ability in whom the people have implicit faith is necessary for success. Father Rapps characteristics have been summarized as:
 - A. Extremely industrious, he never wasted time.
 - B. Cheerful, kind, talkative, plain spoken when necessary.
 - C. Very practical
 - D. Most of his thoughts and conversation given to religion and proper conduct
 - E. A man before whom no evil could stand
 - F. Always supervising every activity
 - G. Spare time given to study of worthwhile things.
 - H. He believed work a cure for most ills
 - I. An eloquent preacher, (It is said he preached several times a week to his followers for more than forty years.)
 - J. Abhorred needless forms and ceremonies.

(There seems to be quite an inconsistency in this arrangement, a communistic organization, where they had all things in common, and at the same time have an absolute ruler in form of one person.)

3. A common bond, as religious faith in some doctrine or a common language, (both in this case) is necessary to unify a group.

4. Where there are no children to raise and educate, the economic problem is decreased greatly. (The Rappist depended upon emigrants from Germany to supply additional members.
5. The underlying basis of the Rappist success, was simplicity in needs, humility, self-sacrifice, neighborly love, regular and persevering industry, prayer and self examination.

The Rappist left their village in a body as soon as Owen completed the purchase. They settled in a body on a site in Ohio, below the present city of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Here the settlement remained, not without difficulties this time, until its final division in 1907. Father Rapp died about 1850. The success of this group in the first part of the century led to many such experiments all over the United States.

New Harmony of Robert Owens

Why did Owen want New Harmony? There were

30,000 acres of good land, 3000 acres of which had been cleared and cultivated. There were 19 separate farms. The village was regularly laid off at right angles. There was a public square, many large brick business buildings, dwelling houses, mills and factories, fine orchards and vineyards. The hardships usually attending the first years in the wilderness in pioneer life had been successfully overcome by the Rappist. There was no debt on the land. No wonder, when we consider all these physical things, Owen was enthusiastic.¹⁶

Robert Dale Owen, son of Robert Owen, describes the place as very beautiful.¹⁷ The land around the village was of the richest quality of alluvial soil, level, above the highest water mark and in excellent farming condition. The valley was surrounded by a semi-circular range of undulating hills, sixty to seventy feet higher than the plains below. This level was about half of a mile wide and was most excellent vineyard land. At this point there was also a deep narrow place in the river which afforded excellent water power for a mill. The hills farther back supplied plenty of excellent building stone and pasture in great abundance.¹⁷

Owen was quite enthusiastic over the prospects here. He confidently predicted that the principles and blessings of communism would spread from "community to community, state to state, continent to continent, finally overshadowing the whole earth, shedding light, fragrance, intelligence and happiness upon the sons of men".¹⁸ Owen also thought the new world the best place to try his experiment. There was a stir about the new world all its own. It was nearer the natural order of man, not having been effected by the complication of society.¹⁹

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Atlantic Monthly, Aug. 1873, pp. 224-236

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Hillquit, History of Socialism in United States, p. 62

¹⁹

G.D.H. Cole, Robert Owen, pp. 180-189

Now that Owen owned this valuable property, what did he propose to do? He proposed to put into actual practice his ideas regarding communism or social relations of people. From an early age Owen had lost all belief in the prevailing forms of religion and developed a creed of his own. This he thought a new discovery. In short he believed man's character was made, not by him, but for him by circumstances over which he had no control. Therefore, to develop proper character, man must be placed in proper surroundings, physical, moral and social from the very beginning.²⁰

Owen considered the absolute necessities of life, to be air, water, food, health, clothing, shelter, instruction, amusement. To secure these there must be a cordial union of mankind. Upon a certain amount of land there must be combined skill, capital, labor and population. The great losses to society resulted, he thought, from armies, churches, lawyers, doctors and exclusive universities.²¹

In short he proposed to place the children of the community in proper surroundings from birth, to educate them in such a way as to make them the type of citizen he desired. And secondly, he proposed to see that all labored some and enjoyed equally the products of labor. Better education and better distribution of the products of labor would solve the

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Thomas Kirkup, History of Socialism, pp. 62-63

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G. B. Lockwood, The New Harmony Communities, p. 80

social problems for all time to come. (Probably the best solution to the problems before us today.) To offer an opportunity for man to develop into the highest possible form of individual, morally and socially, was Owens's purpose. The New Harmony purchase was to furnish the physical plant for the experiment.

The Rappist experiment had given Owen great courage. The Rappist had been successful in supplying physical needs. The marks of toil and suffering shown on the stolid and grave faces of the German settlers. It is true they had been well fed and sheltered, and these things count for much, but there appeared a lack of sincere happiness resulting from proper social contacts and organization. Owen hoped to carry on the physical production in an efficient manner and to add by education and social organization what the Rappist lacked.²²

When Owen arrived in America, he began his work by giving a series of lectures. His first lecture was in Washington, March 7, 1825 in the House of Representative rooms before the most distinguished body so far gathered at the national capital. The audience consisted of the Senate, The House of Representatives, Judges of the Supreme Court, President of the United States, most of the cabinet members and many prominent men. In his address he told his plan, what he hoped to accomplish. He also exhibited a model of the buildings he hoped eventually to erect at New Harmony.

The building, of course, was one thought best adapted to communistic life.²³

In this first lecture and those that followed, he discussed his ideas of the new society. He invited cooperation. He hoped the experiment would be such a success, it would spread over the entire union. Finally Owen closes his lecture tour by inviting "the industrious and well disposed of all nations" to come to New Harmony and have a part in inaugurating the new society.²⁴

Did they come? More than eight hundred responded the first six weeks, another hundred soon after. It was the "most motley and incongruous crowd" ever assembled for a joint enterprise. There were men and women of all classes and vocations, habits and notions. There were professional men, laborers, tradesmen, idlers and adventurers. Many of them considered it a venture of a wealthy eccentric person and thought to gain by it. No test of qualification was imposed on them. No inquiry of motive was made. This admission of all meant much inharmony from the very beginning.²⁵

For a time New Harmony was the rendezvous of enlightened

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Lockwood, The New Harmony Communities, p. 80

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Isbide, Robert Owen, pp. 180-189

²⁵

Hillecitt, History of Socialism in the United States, p. 66

and progressive people from all over the world. Of course, those having all kinds of pet schemes and hobbies came. There was a great number of free-thinkers among the group.²⁶

Comparing the two groups of people, the Germans under Rapp and the English under Owen, each group having complete charge of New Harmony at different times, we find many points of contrast. The former group believed implicitly in the church, and were very devout in their lives and services; the latter group was almost atheistic in belief, with little reverence for the church and prided itself in "free-thinking".

The first group of 800 faced the wilderness with all its hazards; the second group of about the same number had the physical surroundings well prepared for them. The German group, though communistic in principle had a capable, vigorous and respected leader who ruled absolutely; the English group was to be ruled democratically. The first group had no children to raise and educate; the second group had many children which it proposed to feed, cloth, shelter and educate from the age of two until adulthood. The first group had its leader with them always; the latter group had its leader with them only occasionally. The German group had been pre-schooled in their undertaking; the latter group was hastily assembled without purpose. The existence of the former group depended upon its own effort; the latter had the bills paid by another. Considering these things, we can predict

what was almost sure to happen with the second group, the English settlers.

New Harmony under Owen was to be managed the first two years by his son William Owen. On April 25, 1825, Robert Owen addressed the entire membership of the community and many others, in the old Rappist church. "I am come to this country to introduce a better new state of society; to change it from an ignorant, selfish system to an enlightened social system which will gradually infuse all interest into one and remove all causes for contests between individuals."

A week later, the Preliminary Society of New Harmony was formed. This was May 1, 1825. The first constitution was adopted. The society was to be governed by a committee appointed by Owen for two years. After this first two years, the people could select half the members of the governing board. Each family was to live together, consume as nearly as possible only American made goods. Drunkenness and quarreling were forbidden. Owen left the settlement in July 1825, leaving his son William in charge. Upon leaving, he requested the people to meet together at least three times a week, discuss subjects connected with the welfare of the project, and have musical concerts. He left a school of 130 pupils in operation. They were to be educated and clothed at public expense.²⁷

The group of people seem to have been rather rapidly

organized into a working system, due largely to the ability of Owen and his son William. By July 1825, the factories were working. The following number of men were engaged in different types of work:

8 hatters	2 bakers
17 cobblers	2 distillers
36 farmers	1 brewer
4 tanners	1 turner
2 gardeners	2 watch makers
4 blacksmiths	2 turners
1 machine maker	4 coopers
3 printers	3 sawyers
7 tailors	12 seamstresses
2 butchers	9 carpenters
2 stone cutters	2 paper makers
4 brick layers	4 wheelrights
3 weavers	

There was need of many others, such as saddle and harness makers, potters, glaziers, bookbinders and painters. ²⁸

The first year seemed to indicate that project would be a success. In January 1826, Owen returned to New Harmony from Scotland. He was delighted with the progress made during his absence. The remaining or idle factories were soon put into use, new city additions were planned and building started. So pleased was he, that he dissolved the preliminary society, which was to last two years, and attempted to form the final

organization. A committee was selected to draft a constitution. A constitution was formed which included almost everything to please everyone. The old agreement made work and service a virtue. The new constitution, making all equal, had an exceptional appeal to the lazy, the sharpers and the grafters. Owen was entirely too trusting. Calamity soon came.

The economic management, which started off fairly satisfactorily soon fell under the new constitution. Owen made a mistake by not following his original plan of governing the group himself the first two years. The constitution was too complicated to work. The individuals felt only a remote relation to the group as a whole. They felt no responsibility for their own actions in relation to the group. The complaints may be summarized:

1. The industrious did not reap the fruits of their labor.
2. Unmarried men complained they had to help support families.
3. The women feared they would be given more labor than their share.
4. Women, expected to work and be a member of the communistic group, had no vote on matters.²⁹

Soon after the beginning of the second year, branch societies began to be formed. A Mr. Macdonald, a man who came from England with Owen, refused to accept the constitution in

that the elections provided for representative government, not for a communistic organization. As a result of this dissatisfaction, a new society was formed called Macluria. It was a site of 1200 acres purchased from Owen, also equipped by him. Soon after a second organization was formed to be known as Fieba Peveli. Both societies had constitutions governing them quite similar to the one governing the original colony, except the representatives were not elected. They came into office by virtue of their age. The five oldest men of the colony (not over 65) made up the "concil of fathers" ³⁰ A total of ten separate communities formed in and around the original New Harmony group. Owen seemed glad to lease them the land for 10,000 years. His only restrictions were; they were to remain cooperative organizations, never divided into individual shares; the surplus profits of industry were to go to starting new communities; there should be no whisky or other distilled liquors made in the communities. ³¹

The first year of peace and growth seems to have been about the only period of the three years in which anything like success was attained. From the very beginning the venture was against great odds. Owen's method of inviting any or all to

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Cole, Robert Owen, pp. 184-185

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Lockwood, The New Harmony Communities, pp. 161-162

could most likely brought such a mixed group together that a communistic organization was impossible. For some reason, with the forming of new communities and division within, the New Harmony of Robert Owen died out. By 1828 it was a matter of history. Owen had failed miserably in attaining his objectives.

The School in New Harmony

Regardless of the economical and social failure of Owen in New

Harmony, the education of the children was a success. It was a success, not in the immediate results to the children involved, but to the boost given to education in this country. For this reason alone, New Harmony did not live three years in vain.

The schools of New Harmony were under the direction of William Maclure. Maclure like Owen was a Scotchman by birth. Their acquaintance was made in New Lanark in 1819. Maclure went there to see Owens' industrial plant and also to study the schools and their conduct. In 1824, Maclure came to the United States determined to establish an agricultural school similar to one he had conducted in Spain. But at this time Owen was beginning his project in New Harmony. Maclure knew and admired Owen for his work in Scotland. It seemed an excellent opportunity to combine the efforts of the two men. In attaining this, it seems a separate organization was formed known as the New Harmony Educational Society. It had 1000 acres of its own on which some buildings were erected to be used by the school. It was Maclures hope to make "New Harmony the center of American education through the introduction of the Pestalozzian system of instruction"

Pestalozzian system of instruction."³²

In this he partly succeeded according to Warrell³³. "The influence of the little village on the Wabash was far reaching. It gave more eminent names to literature and science than any other town its size. It has stamped its impress on the entire west and may be said to be the birthplace of western culture and American socialism."

To attain his objective, Maclure induced several people of note to come to New Harmony as teachers. They were followers of Pestalozzi in theory and practice. Maclure was considered the head of the school, the superintendent and a Joseph Neef was the head master. Other teachers were Thomas Say, Pliquepal d'Arusmont, Madame Neef, Madame Protegeot, and others. These were firm believers in the Pestalozzian method and had had experience along that line, some had actually taught in his school in Europe.

The children always had a prominent place in Owen's scheme. In fact, it was through the education of the children he hoped to attain his desired goal. By placing them in proper surroundings during childhood they could be made good social beings. The children in Owen's plan were:

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Will S. Monroe, Pestalozzian Movement in the United States, p. 50

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Warrell, A Diamond in the Rough, p. 173

1. To be fed and clothed and given ample opportunity to play from one year of age to five.
2. From five to ten they were to have light employment and the school work be given them by very skillful teachers.
3. From ten to fifteen, the school work continued with additions of technical training.
4. From fifteen to twenty, the technical training continued and the students assisted with the younger pupils.³⁴

Children should never be expected to learn that which they cannot. Teach them in exact ratio to their understanding, going from the known to the unknown. The children were to learn:

1. Mechanics by machines and models.
2. Arithmetic by an instrument call arithmometer.
3. Geometry by an instrument call trigometer.
4. Natural history by examining objects.
5. Anatomy by skeletons and wax figures.
6. Geography by globes.
7. Hygiene and health by experience and observation.
8. Writing and drawing by constant practice.³⁵

The physical equipment for the school was good. There were three large buildings. One was forty feet by sixty feet, two stories high. The upper part was used by the boys for sleeping quarters; the lower part was used for a work shop. The boys learned shoemaking, tailoring, carpentering, tinning and weaving. It seems all boys worked a part of their time in

shops and fields for recreational purposes, a diversion from mental work. This work also served to take place of work in gymnasiums of the old school, and coupled with the work went the practical applications of mathematics and science.

Girls and boys were taught the academic subjects alike, that is, drawing, music, arithmetic, mathematics, natural philosophy and a little chemistry. The industrial work for the girls was of four types, cooking, laundry work, house-keeping and manufacturing cotton and woolen goods. The work engaged in by both boys and girls was not to last long at a time. Not more than half a day at a time was ever to be spent in work of one kind.

There seems to have been plenty of books in the settlement. When Owen returned to New Harmony in January 1826, he brought with him many books. History speaks of a big keel boat coming down from Pittsburgh to the settlement, having so many books and educated people on it, as "A shipload of knowledge" or sometimes "a boat load of knowledge."³⁵

"When Abe was about 17, somethin happend that druv him nigh crazy. Ther e was a feller come over from England, a Brithisher, I reckon, and spoke in Congress about a settlement he was goin' to lay out on the Wabash, buyin' out some loony Dutch religious fellers that had mills an factories and a school thar'.

So w en th is feller spoke in Congress about the Gyarden O' Eden he was a goin' to stake out and fence in on the Wabash, we soon heerd about it. Boats brung news every week. and one day, arly in the winter, a big keel boat

At one time, the school took care of more than four hundred children. Some were allowed to come in from the outside settlements.

Maclure and Owen differed in their opinions regarding educational practice. Owen stood for system and uniformity of practice. Maclure advocated unbounded freedom in all things in school. Owen has been inclined to blame the school in part for the failure of the whole project. Of course within a period of time of two years, the existence of the community, not a great amount could be accomplished. Many prominent educators from America and Europe visited the

Come down from Pittsburg over the Ohio. They called it the boatload o' knowledge, it had such a passle o' boock on' machines on' men o' l'arning on it.... going some place.

New Harmony, Robert Owen Colony was the place. There wasn't scarcely anything else talked about fur a spell. I reckon some folks thought it was a new Jerusalem, an' nobody have to work... Abe'd a broke his back to go, and it nigh broke his heart when he couldn't. Denny, thar's a school an' thousands' o' boock thar, an' fellers that know everything in creation, he'd say, his eyes as big an' hungry as a hoot-owl's. The schoolin' cost only a hundred dollars a year, and he could o' worked fur his board, but Abe might as well o' wished for a hundred moons to shine at night... and there it was only about 60 miles west an' Abe couldn't go. The place petered out after while as it was sartain to do, with all them onery fellers in it, living off the workers. But I reckon it last long enough fur Abe to 'ev l'arned what he wanted to know.³⁶

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Eleanor Atkinson, "Lincoln's Boyhood", (Reminiscences of his cousin and playmate Dennis Hanks) American Magazine, Feb. 1908, p. 366

school during its short life and all spoke of it in terms of praise. One went so far as to say "The New Harmony education is the best in the world."³⁷

The experiment of Owen seems to have ended as suddenly as it started. It took about six weeks to get 800 people to come. The accounts of the project all stop suddenly. They do not discuss the dissolution of the organization or the disposition of the property. It is known that they were continually changing or making new constitutions and that new societies were being formed. Most likely things became so complicated internally that Owen thought best to quit. The accounts give the following reasons for the failure of New Harmony to accomplish Owen's objectives.

1. Owen expected the Rappites to remain until a gradual transformation took place. Their leaving all at once caused him a problem he had not thought of before.
2. Owen looked upon society as a manufactured product, not a growing organism.
3. Money was scarce and in very high repute among the members, almost an object of worship.
4. Sexes fought like cats and dogs about marriage. No politeness or respect existed between single people.
5. Suspicion developed on party of every one for every body else. "Everyone for himself was almost the slogan."

6. Discontinuence of the general weekly gatherings.
7. Community a quickly gathered group, too many anti-social.
8. The expenses were more than the income.
9. People came too fast to be assimilated.
10. Liquor was smuggled in and sold Owen's rules and wishes.
11. Too many of the group had no interest in industry or work.
12. There was no mutual confidence or unison of action and thought.
13. Lack of religious basis upon which successful communities are founded. (Horace Greely and Charles Dona editorially.)
14. Natural results of free love and atheism. (Alexander Campbell)
15. Democrats of pioneer America, harder to handle than servile workingmen of Scotland.
16. Not enough representative deputies to enforce things.
17. Absence of law or grace necessary to govern a communistic organization.
18. Too many cranks among settlers
19. Absence of Owen himself.
20. Equality of reward for idle and industrious.
22. Owen did not have knowledge of difficulties of socialism.
22. He went out of his way to attract historic religions and accepted views of marriage.
23. Owen was tedious, quizzical and over confident.

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24. Failed to realize that transition in men comes slowly.
25. Had too much faith in human nature.
26. Too little understanding of laws of social evolution.
27. He thought he could break the chain of continuity, and by magic create a new set of circumstances which would immediately produce a new generation of rational and unselfish men.
28. There were seven different constitutions drawn up during the two years.
29. Always internal division among settlers about matters.
30. Never was actual prosperity.
31. New communistic settlements continually being formed.

The failure of Owen to accomplish what he desired in New Harmony did not cause him to lose faith in his ideas. He hoped to bring his ideas to a successful culmination and believed America the best place to try to do so.

In the autumn of 1827, Owen was in England trying to interest the Mexican Minister there in his plan. The Minister listened to him in all respect but gave him no encouragement to go to Mexico. However, Owen was firm in his desire and the Mexican Minister gave him a letter of introduction to the proper authorities in Mexico. The letter said in substance, that Owen had a beautiful theory on paper but not practical, in chances of working. He discouraged Owen in his going to Mexico seeking to obtain land for his communistic project.

Owen went to Mexico in 1828. He desired to get possession of the land known to us as Coahuila and Texas. The land of course was to belong to Mexico and controlled by her, Owen sought only the right to settle it and control it on a communistic basis. He hoped to carry out his original ideas, namely; society can be improved and reach the highest state of happiness by properly surrounding and educating the children from infancy; and a proper distribution of the products of mass production.

Owen found Mexico in a state of revolution but this did not deter him. He thought he had converted Santa Anna, the military leader, to his views. He was even able to obtain a conditional promise of a large tract of land in Texas. One condition though caused this to come to naught. The Mexican government would not grant freedom of religion (or freedom from all religion) in the territory, consequently the bill was thrown out.³⁸ (The records of the Coahuila-Texas republic were carefully examined by Dr. Castaneda and his assistants. They have nothing whatever in them regarding Owen or any thing in connection with his Mexican trip.)

Owen came through the United States in the spring of 1829. He visited New Harmony for a time and later engaged in a twelve day debate in Cincinnati with Alexander Campbell. This seems

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³⁹Cole, Robert Owen, p. 187-88.

Lockwood, The New Harmony Communities, p. 245.

to have been the last of Owen's interest in America.

Conclusions

Though the project of Robert Owen in New Harmony, Indiana, failed miserably, both socially and economically, it made some contributions to American life.

First, it gave five children of Owen to this country. They were Robert Dale Owen, William Owen, David Dale Owen, Richard Dale Owen, one daughter, Jane Owen, (Owen had three other children, one died in childhood and two never came to America.

These four sons remained in America and became useful citizens. Some took an active part in things governmental and military. Robert Dale Owen is considered the founder of the Smithsonian institute; he was a representative in Congress in 1842; he was a member of the convention that framed the constitution of Indiana; he later was a representative of the United States in Naples, Italy. The other sons had very creditable records also as well as the daughter. (Two of Owen's sons married two daughters of Joseph Neef, the headmaster of the school) The descendants of Owen in America run into hundreds today.⁴⁰

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Arthur H. Estabrook, "The Family History of Robert Owen," Indiana Magazine of History, Vol. 19, p. 63-101.

The second great contritition to this country by Owen, was the introduction into the school of New Harmony a great number of Pestalozzian trained teachers. This of course was quite a stimulus to better education in the United States. These teachers gradually drifted into other school systems in this country. The school also gave the subject of science a boost, both Owen and Maclure being great students of science.

Had it not been for Owen at New Harmony, Indiana, improved methods in teaching might have been much later in reaching us; the subject of science no doubt would have been delayed; and the well trained four Owen brothers and their worthy sister and their posterity may have contributed to England's welfare instead of the United States.

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